

Einmal mehr: nicht ausgebildete Taucher sterben in einer Höhle

----- Part 1 -----

<http://thedecostop.com/forums/showthread.php?p=393711#post393711>

<http://www.myfoxtampabay.com/myfox/pages/Home/Detail?contentId=7848492&version=11&locale=EN-US&layoutCode=TSTY&pageId=1.1.1>

Bodies of missing cave divers found
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Pasco deputies are helping a dive team search for two divers missing since Tuesday.

HUDSON—Divers have found the bodies of two cave divers who have been missing since yesterday.

Divers went into a water-filled sinkhole in Hudson around 5:55 p.m. and found the two men about a half hour later. The two men have not been identified.

The sinkhole lead to a complex networks of underwater caves and tunnels that reportedly go all the way out to the Gulf of Mexico.

The two men were found not far from the entrance to the sinkhole.

According to Pasco Sheriff's spokesman Kevin Doll, it appears preliminarily that the two men may not have been certified to dive in a cave of the complexity of the one they were found in.

The cave is west of U.S. 19, in a wooded area south of Stevens Drive in Hudson.

It is known by various names such as "The Sink" and "School Sink."

The search for the two men started in Hillsborough County yesterday when the families of the two divers reported them missing.

Then Pasco deputies found one of the men's car near the sinkhole.

The divers haven't been identified.

The sinkhole is popular among divers. A friend of one of the divers told FOX 13 that the two men who are missing are experienced divers who have been diving in the area many times in the past.

<http://www.scubaboard.com/forums/passings/260570-rip-joseph-yessic.html>

RIP Joseph & Yessic

Bodies Found In Dive Cave ID'd As Hillsborough Men

HUDSON - The Pasco County Sheriff's Office has identified the two divers whose bodies were found Wednesday night in underwater caves in Pasco County.

Joseph Christian Hartranft, 52, and Yessic Cozay Spencer, 52, a Marine from Gainesville based at MacDill Air Force Base, were found in School Sink aka Wayne's World, a cave-diving spot on Stevens Drive near Old Dixie Highway.

<<http://www.scubaboard.com/forums/members/yessic.html>><http://www.scubaboard.com/forums/members/yessic.html>

<http://www.scubaboard.com/forums/mem...hartranft.html>

----- Part 2 -----

<http://brandonnews2.tbo.com/content/2008/nov/13/131037/names-divers-found-caves-be-released/>

By LISA A. DAVIS | The Tampa Tribune

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HUDSON - The Pasco County Sheriff's Office has identified the two divers whose bodies were found Wednesday night in underwater caves in Pasco County.

Joseph Christian Hartranft, 52, of 1504 Scotch Pine Drive in Brandon, and Lt. Col. Yessic Cozay Spencer, 42, a Marine from Gainesville based at MacDill Air Force Base, were found in School Sink, a cave-diving spot off Stevens Drive near Old Dixie Highway.

The divers had been reported missing since Tuesday from Hillsborough County. The vehicle of one of the men was found Wednesday night near the entrance to School Sink, which is also known as Wayne's World.

The Pasco County Sheriff's office contracted divers, who found the bodies about 6:30 p.m., about 30 minutes after their search began.

Staff Sgt. Joseph Loewy said Spencer was an activated reservist who was working at U.S. Central Command at MacDill.

Spencer, who is survived by his wife and parents, was involved in the community and attended the Marine Corps' birthday party two days prior to his death, Loewy said. Spencer was on a committee that set up that event in Tampa.

Spencer also did what he could to help with fundraisers for charities, such as a foundation for veterans, Loewy said.

His friend, retired Air Force Master Sgt. Nancy Morgan, said Spencer was well-liked and respected in the military.

"He is the greatest person I ever met," Morgan said. "Honestly, he loved his family. He was dedicated to his country. He works hard. I was in Iraq with him in 2003, and he took good care of me."

Spencer's wife, Sherolyn Spencer, declined to comment today.

Hartranft is a retired Naval Chief Warrant Officer who later took a job as a contractor for Lockheed Martin at U.S. Central Command, said his son, 29-year-old Joseph Hartranft.

Hartranft took up diving a little more than a year ago and had done so several times.

He was born in Pennsylvania and grew up in Atlanta. He was unmarried and left behind five children: Elizabeth, 31; Joseph, 29; Robert, 23; Jacquelyn, 9; and Abigail, 7. The youngest two children live with their mother in Pennsylvania.

"My dad was a fun-loving, good guy," Joseph Hartranft said. "He was a family guy. He loved his kids."

Hartranft loved sports and loved the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Jerry Richardson, an employee at Scuba Quest in Brandon, used to live around the corner from him. A few months ago, Hartranft told him he was trying to become a diving instructor. **Richardson said Hartranft was fully certified as a diver but didn't have full cave certification.**

"That's a whole different breed," Richardson said of cave diving. "You have overhead conditions. It's dark. You need different equipment."

One body was found near the entrance of School Sink, less than 50 feet from the surface. The other diver was found in a side tunnel, sheriff's office spokesman Kevin Doll said.

The area where the men were found is privately owned, Doll said. Other than issuing trespass violations, there's really nothing law enforcement can do to prevent people from diving at the site, Doll said.

It was not clear what kind of diving experience the two men had. They appeared to have the right equipment, Doll said.

"It comes down to personal responsibility. If you're not certified to skydive, you don't jump out of a plane," Doll said. **"Cave diving is one of the most dangerous sports in the world."**

The School Sink property is owned by the National Speleological Society and is open to members only. Members who dive there are required to check in at the Scuba West dive shop on Tower Drive, a few miles south of the site. There they are required to show proof that they are a current member of the organization's Dave Diving Society and have made at least 100 cave dives.

In addition to other prerequisites, they must have dived either at School Sink before or go with someone who has, according to the society.

Once that is confirmed, they must sign a waiver at the dive shop, and then they are given a combination for the gate lock at the site, said Jeff Tobey, owner of Scuba West.

He said authorities told him not to reveal whether Spencer or Hartranft followed this procedure this week.

At the site, off the dirt road west of U.S. 19, a metal gate protects the property. A sign hangs on it reading: "Private Property. No Trespassing [sic]." A chain attached to the gate is locked to a wooden post, but there is no fencing that actually goes around the property. A worn path runs through trees and brush leading to the watering hole.

There's also nothing preventing divers from sharing the combination lock.

"We assume that happens on a regular basis," Tobey said.

Tobey isn't a cave diver and has no affiliation with the property other than being a gatekeeper as a courtesy.

According to society magazine, School Sink is an intricate "tidally influenced cave system." Its visibility can vary, but during what the organization deems its "diveable" months, November through April, the expected visibility is 15 to 30 feet. The organization also warns that the system has a lot of soft black, "which is easily disturbed" and stirs up the water if good technique isn't used.

Tobey said the system has a reputation as being complex and difficult and shouldn't be used by inexperienced divers.

"It's not well used," he said.

He estimated that members use it 30 to 40 times a year. The last time someone came to the shop before the incident was at least September, he said.

Investigators are still trying to figure out what led to the divers' deaths.

Though Tobey has done business with Spencer and Hartranft, he said he did not know anything about their cave-diving experience. Spencer, however, was a Professional Association of Diving Instructors member and taught diving at Scuba West three or four times a year, Tobey said.

"I knew both of the divers; very nice folks," he said. "They would occasionally come through here and get their tanks filled."

He hadn't seen Hartranft as much as Spencer and described Spencer as "outgoing" and "a nice gentleman. Professional. Very excited about diving."